friday
31 august 2001
issue fourteen
version 7.3

piss clear

TAKE BACK BLACK ROCK CITY!

Black Rock City's daily alternative newspaper

photo by Adrian Roberts

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1:00 Outer Ring Road,
Center Camp
Black Rock City,
Nevada

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Waller Press
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e-mail
pissclear@
blue-period.com
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blue-period.com/
pissclear
snail mail
Piss Clear
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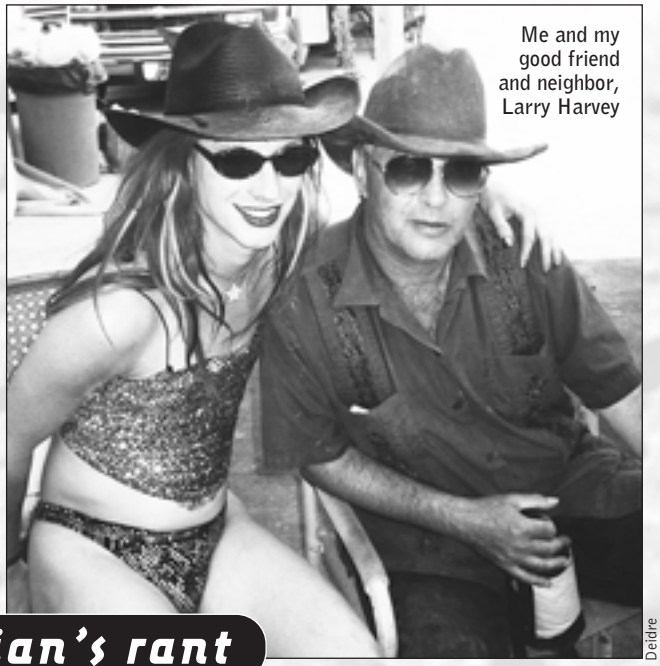
adrian's rant



Me and my good friend and neighbor, Larry Harvey

Deidre

We've always wanted to do a "Take Back Black Rock City!" cover. Not because we really mean it, but just because we thought it would look cool.

Although maybe we *do* really mean it. As you've probably figured out, we've been coming to Burning Man for a long-ass time – nine years, to be exact. And let me tell you, this town used to be different.

But before I get all wistful and misty-eyed, let me just state that, for the record, I hate BM old-timers pining for the days of yore. Sure, things have changed. Hell, I figured *that* one out back in '96, when I ran into some ex-co-workers of mine out on the playa who were just the sort of frat-boy jocks I would go to Burning Man to get away from! Trust me, it was all over, even back then!

Tell everyone that Burning Man sucks!

That's why I've gotten into the habit now of telling people back home how Burning Man sucks. I'm tired of being an evangelist – besides, it's easier convincing people *not* to go. Of course, I don't really mean it. If they're smart, they figure out my ruse. And if they don't, then they probably wouldn't make good Black Rock citizens anyway.

"Oh yeah, the weather is awful. Last year was like a constant dust storm. You eat food and all you can taste is playa dust. Oh, and the people! Annoying candy ravers and crusty hippies and slumming yuppies. And everyone is so pretentious. Oh yeah, it's just awful – I guess it was cool a few years ago, but now it sucks."

"So why do you still go?"

"Oh, well, you know, I publish this newspaper out there, so I kinda *have* to go..."

Playa street cred

So yeah, maybe we *do* want to "take back Black Rock City," and get it back to the magical glory days of the early '90s.

Or maybe we're just saying that to regain our "playa street cred" – especially after spending the last two days hanging out with our next-door neighbor, Larry Harvey.

We've got back... er, back issues. Stop by *Piss Clear* camp!

Deidre

Yeah, yeah, a lot of you have stopped by the *Piss Clear* offices the past few days – so conveniently located in Center Camp – and have accused us of selling out. Softening up. Being co-opted by the Burning Man Powers-That-Be. Well, let it be known, we're still as independent as ever, and we're still the playa's only alternative daily newspaper. Now, when the BMorg starts forking over $20,000 in cash to fund us, like they do with the pampered wussies over in the air-conditioned offices of the *Black Rock Gazette,* then you can start calling us sell-outs.

But until then, we're going to keep telling it like it is, rather than like they'd like it to be. Because let's face it, you read the *Black Rock Gazette* for boring BMorg propaganda and rhetoric. You read *Piss Clear* because you actually want to.

No more dork-ass BM themes!

So is it just me, or are these Burning Man "themes" getting increasingly more lame? Seven Ages of Man, my ass! The whole thing is coming off like a half-assed attempt at cobbling together a bunch of non-related art shit out on the playa – which, okay, let's face it, that's what it is! That Maze – which, by the way, we absolutely love, and always have – has been out here for years, long before it somehow got integrated into this year's dork-ass Burning Man theme. Was it a stretch to fit it in? You bet! But then again, when your theme is as vague as the "Seven Ages of Man," you can pretty much make anything fit.

The thing that really annoys me about this year's theme though, is the street names, which are hard to remember, much less know what order they go in. Sure, you want the street names to reflect the theme, but you also want them to have some easily-navigable logic. So why would anyone know that The Soldier comes between The Lover and Enlightenment? Or that Oblivion comes after The Pantaloon? Could these street names be any more stupid?

'Piss Clear' written on the playa with piss

Adrian Roberts

In past years, the order of the streets was obvious, whether it was alphabetical (like streets in many American cities) or something more creative, like the order of the planets, or parts of the body (like it was in 1999 and 2000, respectively). But this year, there is no discernible logic to the steet names, and frankly, it's fucking annoying! Memo to Larry Harvey: stick to themes you can easily and logically name streets after.

Or better yet, screw the whole "theme" thing. It's not like we need a special theme for Burning Man, other than maybe "Dust" or "Crazy Fun" or "Burn Stuff!" Sometimes, I think the only reason the Burning Man organizers come up with these dork-ass annual themes is so they'll have something to do with themselves the rest of the year. I mean, whatever happened to just having cool, weird, arty stuff out on the playa, without it having to relate – no matter how remotely – to a theme?

Your Black Rock City tax dollars at work

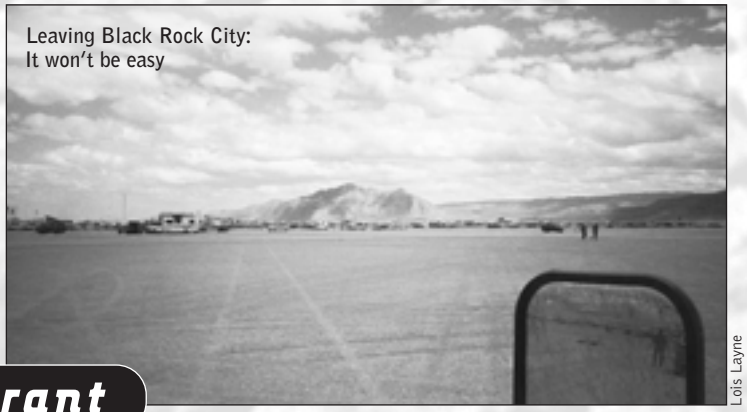
Admittedly though, for the most part, the stuff out there is pretty cool this year – we especially like Amazing Larry's Cube Club. And it better be cool, because that's your Black Rock City tax dollars at work! But sometimes I wish they'd just spend that money on more porta-potties instead. Maybe next year.

But until then, there's this year, and so far, despite the weather, we've been having a blast. We hope you've enjoyed reading *Piss Clear* – this is our last issue for the year.

What, you ask? Aren't we a daily newspaper? Sure we are, but tomorrow is a holiday, so we've given ourselves the day off! It's Burn Day and we want to go out and play! We'll see you out there on the playa!

Adrian

Burnt out *by SUMMER B.*


Leaving Black Rock City: It won't be easy

Lois Layne

rant

Nobody ever writes about "coming down" from Burning Man. Getting all the corrosive but strangely sweet-smelling alkali dust off and out of everything it covers; putting away boas and grass skirts and glitter and shiny silver jumpsuits and unpacking everything that hasn't been set on fire; shooting evil glares at tokens of this modern world's technology, convenience, and obligation; heaving expansive and weighty sighs (and in the case of some of my more emotional friends, giving in to unexplained and intermittent crying jags) in the weeks following the festival in the desert.

Burners who previously caught shit from non-Burners for endlessly planning for, making costumes for, and rhapsodizing about what non-Burners see as either a useless waste of resources, an unsanitary pyromaniac's heathen-fest, a very very silly party, or a straight-up budding cult hear nothing from their dusty and sunburned desert rats upon return, who leave off their normal social routines to burrow and hide and share pictures with others who were there. ("Nobody told me about this – nobody mentioned the aftershocks," a first-time Burner tearfully exclaimed on the phone. "I want my mommy.") It's pathetic, really, but it makes complete sense: like children who've come home from a week-long carnival, like red pill takers who get pulled off the Matrix, like adventurers who've returned from the wilds of Borneo to be slapped in the face with McDonald's and car alarms, we whine.

Last year, a few days after I had returned from the playa, I was nursing my comedown at a film screening, when I noticed two glum and stunned-looking kids next to me talking in hushed and listless tones. I overheard the words 'space lounge' and 'duststorm,' and we struck up a suddenly animated conversation. Together, we made a list.

The social habits of the "real" world, as seen from the vantage point of Burning Man:

1. Even the most stylish hipsters, mavens, divas, and superfreaks look funky, but frighteningly clean.

2. It is not socially acceptable to pick your nose in the presence of others.

3. People are subdued, and not inclined or encouraged to draw out neighbors, peers, or entire rooms with spontaneous performances. There's no unsolicited intangible gift exchange, aside from the occasional compliment or well-put-together outfit.

4. People keep to themselves and their friends and don't generally walk around giving thumbs-ups and "woo"s and feel that there's something to celebrate.

5. People make an effort to blend.

6. People don't have to consider the unpredictability of the weather in every action, as most nighttime activities "worth doing" are enclosed and separated from the natural world.

7. People don't hug strangers, and if they do, it's weird, and grounds for arrest.

8. Art is nowhere near as relevant or important or revered as it should be to everyday life on earth.

9) The world is composed of 95 percent spectators, and those of the 5 percent creators and participators who aren't accepted in the mainstream are generally doomed to a misunderstood life of ridicule and financial instability.

10. People absorb entertainment rather than create it. Commerce, not community, is the basis of diversion and recreation. Gimme.

Later that night at a party, I ran into the Salami Sisters, a performance art troupe, who shared my Burning Man comedown experience. "I know we're all depressed about leaving the desert," Salami Sister Number One said, "but you just have to remember that Burning Man, or any other holiday, couldn't possibly last all year, because specialness is nothing without mundanity. Just make sure you're never mundane yourself."

– *Reprinted in part from the* SF Bay Guardian.

Weekend drug report

by SHAFT@GIGSVILLE.ORG

PROBLEM SUBSTANCES
Users should approach these drugs with caution:

DESCRIPTION: Blue tablet w/toilet seat imprint
STREET NAME: Johnny-On-The-Spots
ANALYSIS: 50% MDMA, 50% Ex-Lax. User has to spend a long time in the porta-potties, but strangely seems to like it.

DESCRIPTION: Large white mushroom with reddish spots
STREET NAME: Magic Marios
ANALYSIS: In combination with glowing stars, can lead to hallucinations of invincibility, increased height, and feeling that one is a small, Italian plumber being chased by turtles through a two-dimensional world.

DESCRIPTION: Small, narrow mustache
STREET NAME: Little Hitlers
ANALYSIS: Worn under the nose, delivers a steady stream of amphetamines through the nostrils. Faint smell of human ash. Can lead to paranoid delusions that you have invaded Poland.

DESCRIPTION: Severe dehydration
STREET NAME: Swimmin' the Black Rock River
ANALYSIS: Lowest cost high on the playa. Achieved by drinking nothing for three days straight. (May also include a free helicopter ride to Reno.)

GOOD ECSTACY
The following contains 100% MDMA:

DESCRIPTION: Red tablet with Yahoo! logo
STEET NAME: Yahoos!
ANALYSIS: These corporate-sponsored hits are available from any Yahoo! representative in Black Rock City. Just find your Yahoo! buddy and say, "Yes, I Yahoo!"

DESCRIPTION: Ecstacy-laced suncreen rubbed into genitals
STREET NAME: The Complete Release
ANALYSIS: Seen at Camp Sunscreen. Ask for "the pink tube with the white cream."

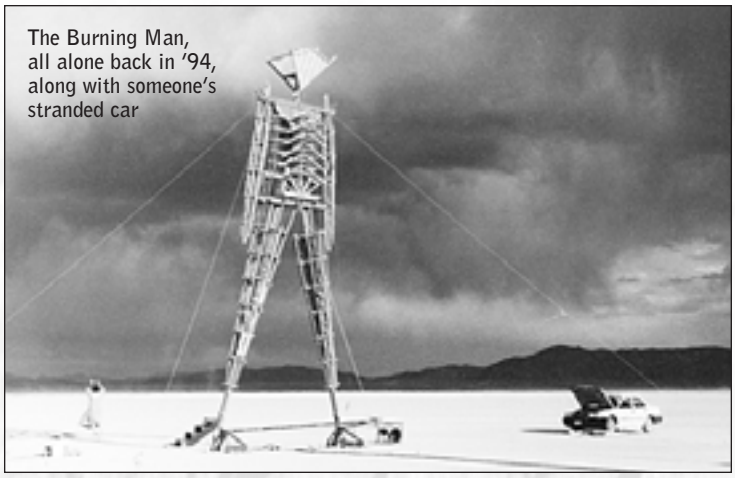
DESCRIPTION: Brown tablet w/ puckered star
STREET NAME: Assholes
ANALYSIS: It seems everybody's got one.

DESCRIPTION: Empty capsule
STREET NAME: Placebos
ANALYSIS: This will get you SO HIGH!

WORD ON THE STREET

BE AWARE: A new drug has hit Black Rock called "Apple Brown Betty." The high has been described as "cinnamony." Do not snort the crumbly crust.

RUMOR: One of the Rangers is a narc.
REALITY: One of the narcs is a dealer. Find him by approaching any Pershing County law-enforcement official with the code phrase: "Where's the blow, Pig-eyes?"



The Burning Man, all alone back in '94, along with someone's stranded car

Adrian Roberts

You missed out!

by STEPHEN ELLIOTT

last rant

Well, it's another year at Burning Man, and let me tell you this: It's not what it used to be. No sir, it's not like back in the good ol' days when Burning Man was an exclusive meeting of only the hippest people. That's right, Burning Man used to kick ass. We would shoot our guns and hang art installations from the clouds. It was anarchy in a good way, shared by people that knew how to function without rules – though there was that one mustard gas incident, we won't get into that. The drugs were cleaner – hell, the drugs were free. The people were better-looking. Everybody fucked. It was everything you wanted it to be. That was back when things were real.

Not anymore.

Ever since my first Burning Man, I've had a certain group of friends that would raise their eyebrows in disdain at me for attending something that's been popular for more that two years. Never mind that none of them had ever been to Burning Man. The feeling was if you weren't in early, you weren't in. Their common thought was that Burning Man was a frat oasis out in the desert hosted by Nike and Gatorade and sponsored by the Coalition To Legalize Date Rape.

And this year, it may be the horrible, tired, not-cool-anymore event that I've been hearing about for so long. People are caving. The people that wouldn't show up before are all here this year. My friend Mistress Hellena is here. I've never known anything to be cool enough for this über-hip dominatrix, who long ago spurned Bondage-A-Go-Go as the Bridge and Leather crowd. Pat is also here. Pat is so cool that when Kurt Cobain killed himself, he responded by stating that Nirvana had sold out. My yuppie neighbor is here as well. True, we live in the same building, but he's a yuppie and I'm not. I'm in a tent at Wiggle Camp, and he's in a Winnebago eating sushi.

Sure, there are plenty of reputable freaks here, like David Cobb, the legal counsel for the Green Party. But that's not the point. The point is that this year's Burning Man is not as good as last year's Burning Man. The real Burning Man, the one that's really cool, the one that people will be talking about five years from now as "the good old days," is taking place at a secret location under a different name in another state. And you need a password to get in. (I'll give you a hint, it rhymes with sushi). I have one thing to say to all the newcomers here: You missed out.

haiku

Hi! Where do you live?
In a giant trailer park
Called Black Rock City

Last year I made maps
Of every city block here
I never used them.

I wish for hot days
Camp Sunscreen
is much more fun
With naked people

Look – I am sparkly!
Oh, you found
Glitter Camp too?
Glam is so trendy

If it didn't come
Out of your body, then it's
Not playa spin-art

Amateur poets:
Haiku means 5-7-5
So get a hai-clue!

Remember when I
Said that I
really loved you?
I was just X-ing

"Burning Man
– no way!
Isn't that some
kind of cult?"
Hmmm... perhaps
they're right...

– PF

Strip.

Dance.

Burn.

Think different.

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zippo

Use it to start something